Virtuoso
Uki Ogasawara

Virtuoso di Amore

Kenzo Shinozuke is a talented but under-appreciated pianist, so when wealthy nobleman Lorenzo Carlucci offers to be his patron, he leaps at the chance. However, being patronized by Carlucci exacts a price that the pianist may not want to pay: For Carlucci is an eccentric and demanding patron, whose temperament often clashes with Kenzo's own stubbornness. The friction between patron and artist threatens to drive them both to the brink of madness, or that of desire.

But, it is undeniable that Kenzo's talent flourishes under Carlucci's patronage. Can Kenzo overcome his pride and the ghosts of his past to finally achieve greatness?

Enjoy!

ISBN-13 978-1933809-23-6
ISBN-10 1933809-23-X
51299
9 781933 809236

18+

MANGA

USA $12.99

Virtuoso di Amore

Uki Ogasawara

Virtuoso di Amore

Uki Ogasawara

Kenzo Shinozuka is a talented but under-appreciated pianist, so when wealthy nobleman Lorenzo Carlucci offers to be his patron, he leaps at the chance. However, being patronized by Carlucci exacts a price that the pianist may not want to pay. For Carlucci is an eccentric and demanding patron, whose temperament often clashes with Kenzo's own stubbornness. The friction between patron and artist threatens to drive them both to the brink of madness, or that of desire.

But, it is undeniable that Kenzo's talent flourishes under Carlucci's patronage. Can Kenzo overcome his pride and the ghosts of his past to finally achieve greatness?

Enjoy!

ISBN-13 978-1933809-23-6
ISBN-10 1933809-23-X
51299
9 781933 809236

18+

PROFILE

Uki Ogasawara

Its not the same as a piano but even studying the keyboard for fifteen years didnt make me any good at it I realize Im better at listening to music than producing it myself , does that mean I wasted fifteen years?

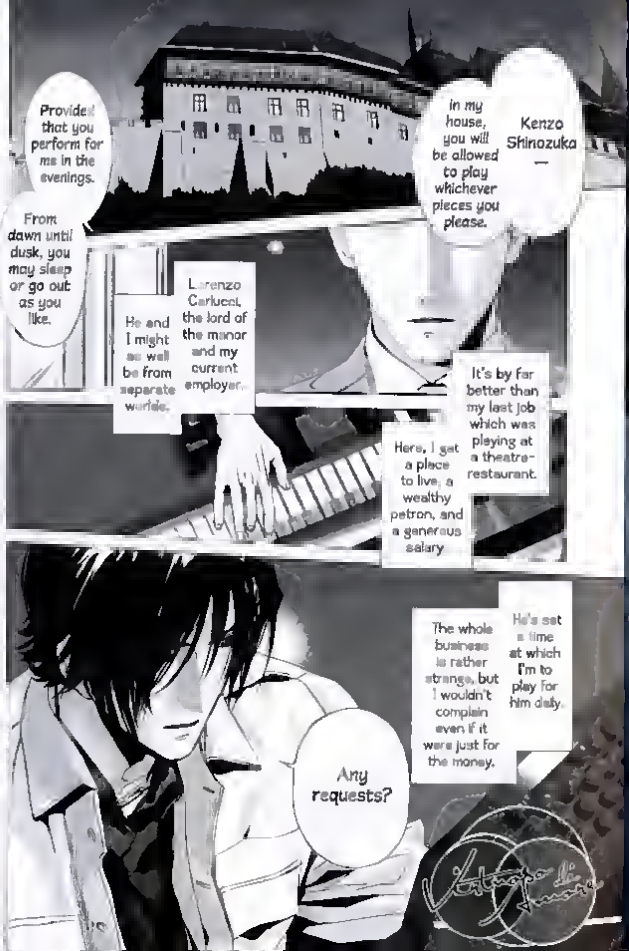
Coming Soon!

Available

Virtuoso di Amore

Uki Ogasawara

DramaQueen



Virtuoso di Amore

Uki Ogasawara

CONTENTS

Sehnsucht ... 5
Clair de Lune ... 29
Rhapsody in Blue ... 61
Fantaisie Impromptu ... 93
Piano Concerto Duet ... 129
Aftertalk ... 179

This man—
If you don't mind my asking—
Why did you hire me?

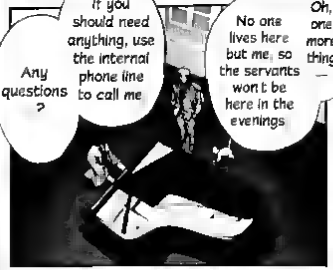
MYAAO

Have I met him somewhere before?

...So he was a customer.

I heard you playing at the restaurant.

Perhaps if you could include Beethoven's *Sehnsucht* Waltz on occasion...
Virtuoso di Amore


Any questions?
If you should need anything, use the internal phone line to call me
No one lives here but me, so the servants won't be here in the evenings
Oh, one more thing—

Find me the sheet music.
Damn it, I think I threw that one away

Carlucci came to the music room every evening without fail.
He must really enjoy hearing the piano.

hmph...
Even though I saw him constantly we rarely talked. It wasn't as if I could make idle conversation while I was working.
Each performance lasted until ridiculous times of the night.
What on earth did this man do during the day?

Shinozuka —
I'd like you to wear a proper tuxedo when you perform.

...More like going to a wedding every day.
Here, in the house?
I want you to pretend that this room is a concert hall.

Look closely at the score
The tempo should drop off more in this port.
I'm third rate
I've never had the chance to play in a concert hall.

I expected better from you
The hell is his problem ?!
lacks clarity
You're making the right sounds but it
After several days Carlucci began critiquing my performance
... Isn't he making me play for him because he can't play himself ?!

This here—
GRAB
KZZZZ

I'm late!
Damn it!

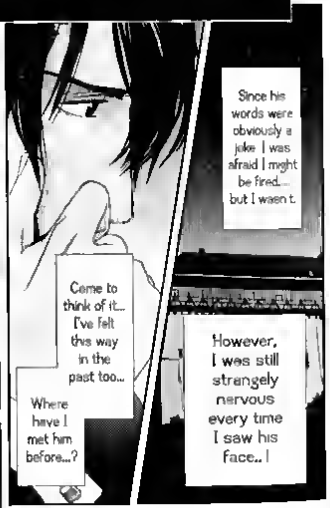
Today he left by car and was gone all day

Unfortunately, I'm only third-rate.
This isn't what I would expect from a first-rate musician.

I... was under the impression
that you were first-rate

What's he talking about?
Is he mocking me?

An unexpected counterattack...!!



What do you want? Don't startle me like that.
Are you hungry?
Uh... I've never fed you before.
He's not answering!
That man shouldn't be allowed to keep a pet.
In the weeks that I had been here I had never gone to Carlucci's private rooms before.
What he really spends his time doing is anybody's guess.
Hey, how much further?
Meow!
Here?
Carlucci? I'm coming in...
!
The smell of cigars...!
What the...?
He was here after all!

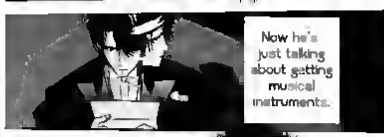
Back in my school days.
There was a person who used to smoke cigars that same color

They have a milder scent than the paper wrapped ones.
Your cat is calling you!
Hey!

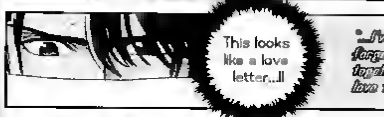
If I let you hit me then will you listen to me?
?!
Those scars...

A German maestro's name...!!
My dearest Ferenc Cerlesci,
I am most delighted to work for the one of your theatre several days past... With your generous assistance, I feel confident that the performance will

The cat food's gotta be here somewhere...


Now he's just talking about getting musical instruments.

Is he a stage manager ...?


This looks like a love letter...!!
"...I've been unable to forget the time we spent together, and I would dearly love to see you again..."

Hey... am I going to have to dig through all your stuff?
I need to get out of here quick.
Uh, oh ...
"You drive me crazy."

I was attending a music academy
Living in a foreign land, speaking a foreign tongue
But there was one student from a different grade who kept me company when I practiced
You must never let go of the passion you have
I was lost and lonely, younger than the other students
A foreign-looking man who unabashedly stroked my head.
What are you wearing some weirdo cult costume?
He acted like a wealthy prodigal son but I never learned his real name
He could play difficult Rachmaninoff pieces that would be tricky even for a pro...
An extremely peculiar person...
(to be honest I was scared of him...)
A while later...
Guy in the hood? Haven't seen him lately
I do not want to hear about him
Drugs drove him to attempt suicide, and a riot ensued...
He was shipped off to a rehab center...
...Or so someone told me afterwards.
CLINK!
Same tobacco, same scars... could it be...
Him...?
Yeah, yeah, I'm getting to you
...!!
This...
This is a video of me?!
If I get caught here I'm guaranteed to get fired.
!!
ka-chik

I've had enough already!

I've never been able to play the same since that incident.

Afterward stories about the recital flew like crazy and in the midst of it all I slipped into obscurity

I scratched out a living playing at bars and restaurants in the area.

Because there was nothing for me but the piano after all—

Kenzo

Even I had not seen a tape of that before

ga-chik

Something was off that day. I kept missing notes over and over retake after retake. That had been my big chance...

CRACK

The selection was Beethoven's *Sehnsucht Waltz*

It's a video recording of my last concert... eight years ago!

I grabbed a prop axe

KENZO?!

Oh My God !!

Kenzo, what's wrong?!

Mamaaa

Reply to "Kenzo-sensei" with "Yes" in a loud voice

...Had I even liked the piano to start with?

Kenzo-chan your next contest is in the spring

And at long last, I'd made it to the international competition. But...

He had called me a "gem of passion"

I'd been practicing relentlessly

The score for *Sehnsucht*.

Why did you hire me?

Carlucci, I've been wanting to ask you

I didn't mention anything about the day before..

And then choose this particular music?

I felt that your previous job was a waste of your talants.

I wanted to hear you play for me.

I want you to play it for me

I enjoy the piano.

So fire me and buy a music box

Oh yes, and thanks for feeding my—

That's not the reason why.

Carlucci didn't come to the music room that night.

The next day..

Shinozuka —

A glorious stage...

You quit the piano too?

But the piano I always listen from backstage.

Playing was a hardship for me.

I'm here now because I was able to quit.

I'll take that offer

...

?!

Ahh

I recognize the smell of your cigars from long ago

You didn't find out about me through the restaurant.

Kenzo

The other day, you asked if you could become my partner

I thought you'd forgotten.

brush

Lorenzo...
Then yes...
If you can perform for a concert hall again...
Yes...
If I play on your stage...
instead of monetary payment...
Will you be mine exclusively?
I swear it..
nah
nah
I do what it takes to advance my theatre.
You'll sleep with just anybody?!
But they don't all have to be
As well you know.
My last lover was a gifted maestro.
Ah—
Stop, for my sake...
I don't like it.
Kenzo...
Master Sehnsucht and return to the stage...
That's what I
want from you
Nn...
Nngh...
THRUST
THRUST

Clair de Lune

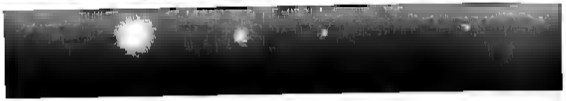
End

At the end of a wide hallway
There's a large room that is always kept locked.
I cornered the maid who'd worked there for generations...
What's that room for?
...and asked her.
glare
INSIDE THAT ROOM ...IS SOMETHING
ABSO-LUTELY DREADFUL.
I've been working here for a month now...
as a live in pianist for an eccentric aristocrat.
STOP!
Since this aristocrat was an older student from my music academy days, he's difficult to please.
This is a very emotional part
Granted, I've improved since he's turned my performances into nothing but private lessons.

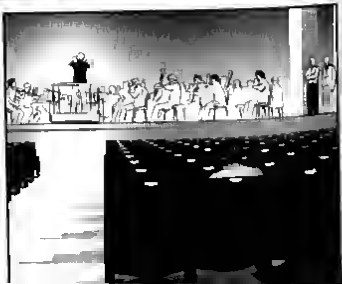
AGH!
CLAMP
Please don't break my piano.
This might as well be a class-room!
Do I really have to listen to all your nitpicking?
Kenzo ...
You don't have the true feel for this piece.
That's why it seems like I'm criticizing everything.
I'm not letting you leave until you can play it to my satis-faction.
...Unless you decide that your earlier promise wasn't worth it, in which case I won't say anything
My employer, Lorenzo Carlucci. By day, he's the stage manager for a theatre.
When he promised that he'd be mine exclusively, he left out the part where I have to perform for him in a concert hall.
...
You slept with someone at the theatre again.
It's none of your business.
I've decided it's impossible given the way I play now...!!
Yeah... you're right!!
You're asking too much of me...
I'm more of a realist...
You didn't used to be
Whmp

*Natsume Soseki was one of Japan's leading authors during the period of modernization. One of his most famous novels was "Wagahai wa Neko de aru" which translates as "I am a Cat." People no longer use the word "wagahai," but it comply means "I" or "me."

It's not that I'm not interested!
But, that's the theater where you screw other people...!



Fadland Philharmonic Orchestra



Alexander Freier is conducting
Fadland Philhar-monic
Which one?
There's an orchestra performing this evening
If you're feeling rested, would you like to come to the theater?
Kenzo ...?

...It has nothing to do with me

Freier ...!! He's...
the one who wrote that letter...!

If you are not interested, but...
It's no skin off my nose,

I always wonder.
what it is you're thinking?
Lorenzo --
Then forgive the intrusion
L...
Alexander Freier, a conductor who first made his name as a pianist.
Now, he's a maestro who is known by all, old and young alike--
He's also a composer.
If there's something you wish to discuss, I'm happy to listen.
Maestro Freier.
Let's talk about non-work matters, all right?
But, this time... I have no intention of simply using you for release.
Forgive me for speaking to you this way
If the musicians don't object, it's fine by me.
I think it might be a little too dark in the back...
Is the stage lighting OK?

You used drugs to escape and hid up on your roof tops

!!

But the was headstrong and chose to flee the family... all the more reason why you couldn't do the same

You had a younger sister who received the same up bringing.

!

Why is that?

And yet here you are, back in the theatre.

Heh...

A pianist... A virtuoso far beyond what your parents could ever have imagined.

My stories aren't very exciting

You think so?

I want to hear about what you like about you talk, your family

Both of your parents were musicians.

You were raised to become a ...isn't world-class musician that right? yourself

Working here, do you ever run into old acquaintances?

You graduated from a nationally acclaimed music academy

According to some, I suppose.

Mmm...

whmp WHMP

You say that like I'm the only one enjoying this

You seem to like it well enough, too

Ah...! Ah...

I won't do anything beyond what my work requires... From now on...

Are you threat-ening me?

Who is he?

If your tainted musician is coat instead of diamond, then even I won't be able to shape him

Lorenze ...!

He told me to come right away but he hasn't come out!

...

I was searching f something

you'll listen?

Does that mean if I have a request...

Since you say that you want to hear me talk—

Some no-name musician?

And if you don't ...

Under your guidance

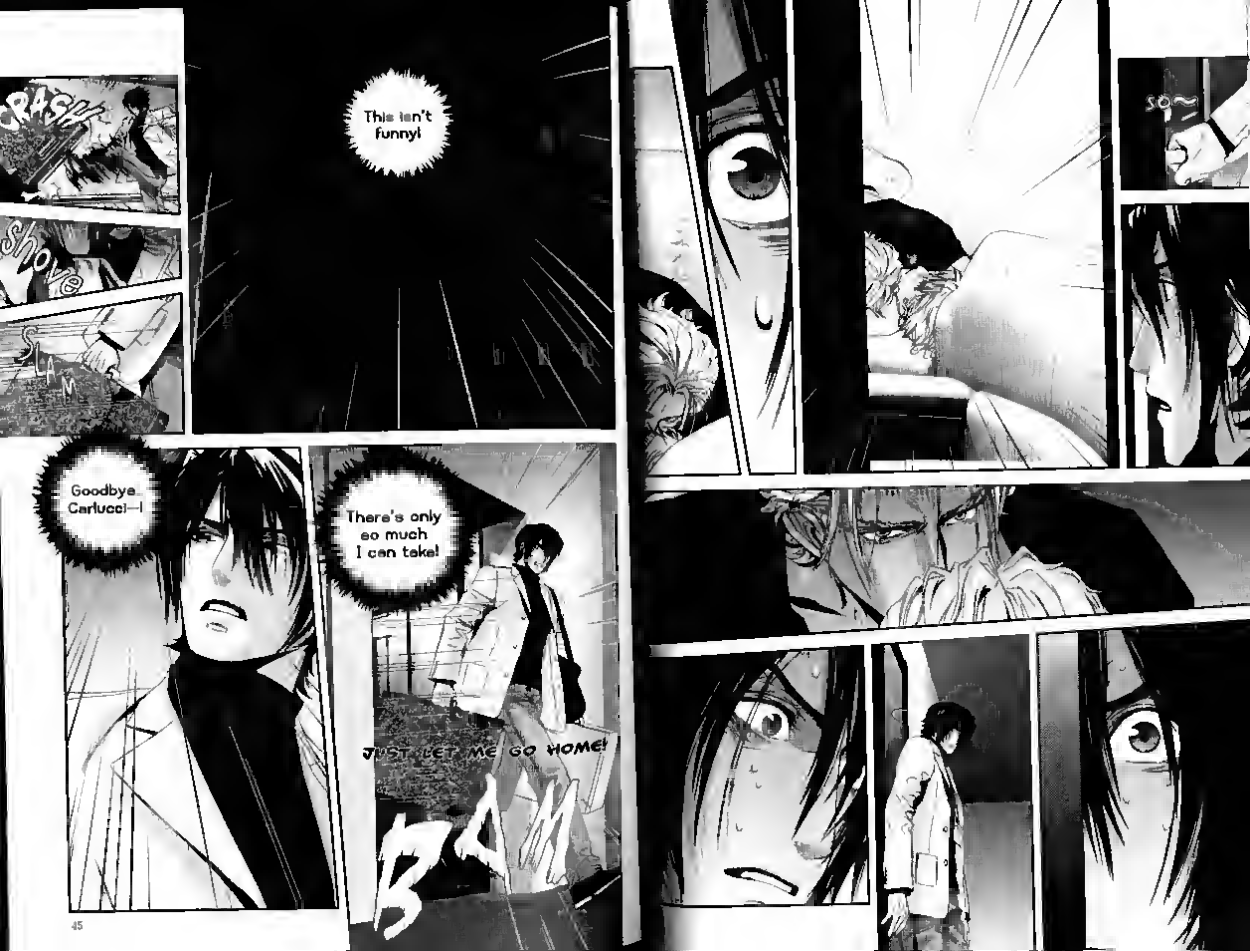
Even a tainted diamond can regain its luster

Maestro Freier—

There's a pianist that I want you to show-case as a soloist

I know it's a bold thing to ask but

Now that I've found it, this time, I plan to make it shine


CRASH
Shove
SLAM
This isn't funny!
Goodbye Carlucci—!
There's only so much I can take!
JUST LET ME GO HOME!
BAM
SQ~

MYAO!
MYAO!
Give your master my regards
I'm a wandering pianist again
Wagaha! ...
And if he fergets to feel you, bite him
MYAO
You're an Idiot!
What? Are you stuck up there?
MYAO!!
MYAO!
?!
I need to talk to you...
Kenzo, are you home yet?
Ken ...
Kenzo?
Kenzo!
He saw us...
Kenzo!

Whish
No!!
A ghost...
Some-one's standing up there...?!
...?!
Oh the guy in the hood?"
"He did drugs and even tried to commit suicide
He was sent off to rehab or some-thing."

It's almost morning.

Kenzo.

I was just uh... out for a walk!!

No! I, uh-!

You receive your pay daily, so...

Are you quitting?

Instead of down at me

You were looking at something way out there-

I don't believe this

Kenza. I have something to tell you.
I asked Freier to perform with you as a soloist.
I figured it couldn't hurt.
When I tried to tell you, I found that you'd already left.
I can smell Freier on him.
I don't know what will come of this, but
If you never have the chance to perform, then you have nothing to work for.
This was all my idea, but I swear that if you succeed, I'll uphold my end of the bargain.
It's not for your sake... It's for my own ego.
We were stuck in the same circumstances, you and I.
But just ...ance, ...wed ...
How long has it been
since I played like I had something to say?
How magnificent you could be when you broke free—
Perhaps —

It was being alone so much as a
that gave me the will to fight.
Debussy's Clair de Lune.
You're still holding back.
It's no use!
I can't work with Wagahai at there!
MYAAGOO!
!!
SLAM
So—
This is the pianist you've taken a shine to.
Who just happens to be living with you.
What ?!
It's not like that!
I'm... merely employed by Lord Carlucci.
My job is to play the piano—
Housing is part of the contract...
Oh really?

I can't quite credit your faith in him

But, oh well..

I'll be back later, Kenzo...

Don't follow us, this conversation does not concern you.

What an asshole! Hasn't he ever heard of "manners"?!

You have to choose the soloist carefully

This piano concert will be recorded live.

If this boy is capable of performing to my standards, then we'll talk.

But...!!

If the pianist hates the conductor, then there's no hope for the performance.

Young Kenzo is quite infatuated with you isn't he?

And— the selection?

Thank you so much!

Schedule a rehearsal sometime and I'll see how he plays.

After all, I'll be in town for the Sibelius Concert... I'm sure I can find time to drop by.

Not a single word about your piano playing.

When he saw you, he chuckled and said, "My, he's grown up."

You played at the restaurant

When he and I used to go out for dinner—

Though, I enjoyed your album

This one is particularly old

of them... Including a lot that are out of date.

I have so many CDs that I can't keep track

CLICK

Please don't do this..

That's my record

It's been long since it was out of production

KENZO

!!

clack
It's out of tune...!

???

???

A CD ...?

♫
HEY!

CRAAAA

GACHK!
Ah?! It's open...

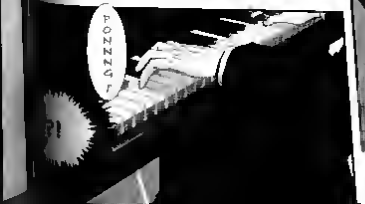
Is it ...?
The room at the end of the hall...

But... I have one more condition for putting him onstage.

The public debut of a film score.
My newest composition

Maestro —
And what would that be?

Today, we were supposed to come home together.
Lorenzo still isn't back.


PONNNG!

You sure did a number on this thing

Haven't you done the same?

Rhapsody In Blue

We've no other choice if we want to get you onstage

These were the terms he laid down

The choice of music for your concert is Freier's latest composition, *Piano Concerto Duet*

He intends to humiliate me by having me play opposite you...

The truth is, he might still change his mind even after hearing it...

"INSIDE THAT ROOM...IS SOMETHING ABSOLUTELY DREADFUL."

The noise came...

from that?!

SHOCK

End

Freier chose the soloists
to perform his Piano Concerto Duet.
It's not just me— he wants to make Lorenzo play as well.
Mine wasn't this bad, was it ?!
This piano looks like it hasn't been opened in ages...
Because you had someone there to stop you.
Lorenzo... you weren't imitating me, were you...?
!
I did it first.
You're the mimic, Kenzo
Which is why I was stunned to see that video of you.
So—you did know that I'd been in your room and seen the video!
You horrible faker, pretending to sleep through it...
...
CHOO!
Don't you have another piano?
CHOO! CHOO!
If you're going to practice with that ...
Can you at least call someone to give it a tuning?
Though if you did, I bet they'd just get pissed off and walk right back out.
I never imagined that he was guilty of the same thing
that I had done onstage so long ago.
CREAK
To my knowledge ...
there isn't another piano in the house.

Then buy one!
It's not that simple
It should be that simple since you've got the money to buy a pianist.
In- in any case...
You shouldn't be playing it in this condition.
Aren't you supposed to be a stage manager?
Lately...it seems my past is coming back to haunt me
Kenzo...
This is mine to set right...
Am I allowed to explore your castle.
Or not?
wobble
There's still so much I don't know
You'd best do it in the daytime.
At night, you may get lost.
SWIP
Lorenzo!
That gray cloak!
Why are you wearing it again?

Rustle
Selling off his parents' cherished instruments, one after another!
Does he regret it even the slightest?

And I had the perfect place to put it...

What's this about selling stuff?
Nice to see you in something other than pajamas.

Him?

What?!
CLANG

Around here?

He told me where the storage rooms were.

Good heavens ...
even their prized viola...!
That's... the maid's voice!

That night ...
I never did learn the mystery of Lorenzo's gray-hooded alter ego—
I went to bed after I got tired of cleaning in silence.

You have no sense of humor...

Yes, that's how Lord Lorenzo makes a laughingstock of this house too.

Now hold on a minute...!

Having strangers in this building would be intolera—

But don't tell his lordship—

You may call me 'Valeria.'

Excuse me, miss, I never got your name?

Miss Valeria, if I could ask a favor— There's something I need you to look into...

Yes, it's a symbol of his resolution never to play the piano...

Your "something dreadful,"

I saw it.

...Please disregard anything you might have over-heard...

You have an axe...!

Where should I put it?

It's not that simple.

Then buy one!

He's a stage manager, which means he works for a living—

I guess being an aristocrat doesn't automatically mean you're rich.

All this weird stuff...

He'd make a killing if he turned it into a public exhibit, wouldn't he?

It's crass, but you'd think that'd be better than selling it...

Kenzo?
And I'll learn to keep my temper, too
Hey, Wagahai knock it off!
zenkah
You're an adult. Kenzo Shinozuka act like one!

You're that eager?
There you are.
I was looking for you.
Freier just faxed a copy of the score.

Piano Concerto Duet, eh?
Who does he think he is, Mozart?

It's depressing.
But how can I play something written by my rival?!
How much money is he getting for this?
If he were just the conductor— I could deal with it...

I have to leave soon...
!!
That's not the only thing my job entails.
With you at his side? That's asking for trouble.
Are you coming?
It's sold out, but you could watch from backstage.
And now, you're off to one of his concerts.
Did it ever occur to you—
How I feel, having to play this...?
You're my employee, are you not?
As I recall, that's what you told Freier.

THRUST
...!
Oh!
Ah...
Lies —
You're going to get fucked either way, by me or by someone else...
It's Freier's turn to smell me on you.
"Are you coming?" Hah! As if I would go see that!
Mr Kenzo do you mind if I come in?
There is one, a model C-227.
It's too late tonight, but I can call them tomorrow.
Yeah.
Thank you.
Mr. Kenzo .....
I caught sight of Lord Lorenzo as he was going out...
And I would appreciate it if you wouldn't quarrel with him.
ba-dump
What ...!
He was the one who wanted to pick a fight.
What does that old hag know about anything..?

He's wearing the cloak again...
He's put out quite a few solo records.
I acquired a sample disc of Freier's playing.
Hard day at work?
I was afraid you weren't coming home tonight.
Let's talk about this later
He said that he didn't care what we thought of it, since it's just a sample...
I listened to it in the car, and it's a little flashier than I'd expected.

Damn it. I can't get the timing down without a partner.
Not when I'm playing both parts myself...
That old bastard's written a strange piece of music...
Crack

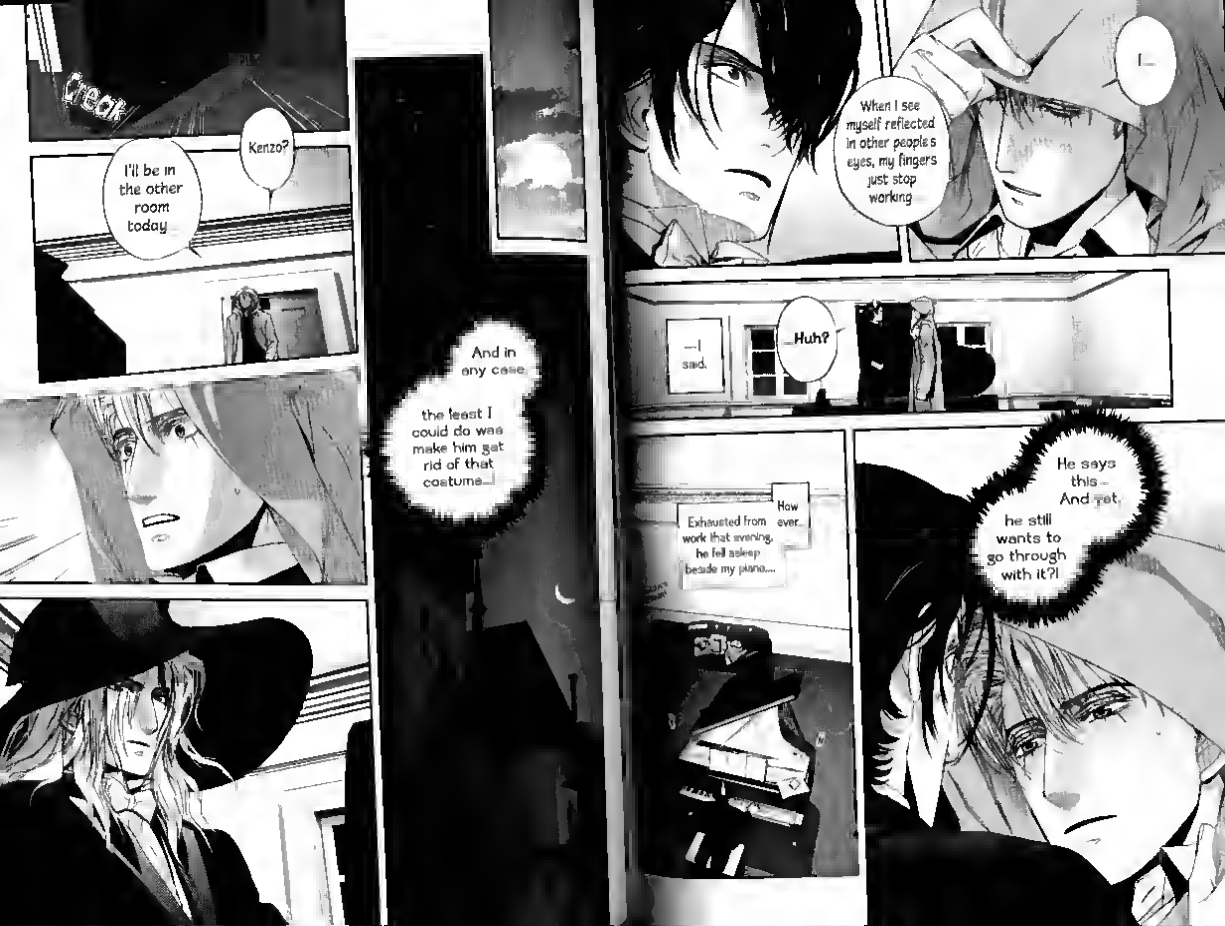
On the day of your actual concert—
Even if you've rehearsed it over and over again, you'll still be nervous before the real thing.
I'll worry about how I'll be able to put your mind at ease...
And if I can, in good conscience, send you out there.
Maestro Fruler it's almost time.
...So you've gotten over it?
No, I haven't!
You're just doing your job.
And I'm looking ahead.
I won't be content unless I'm first rate.
You smell like soap...
Did you take a shower?
I wonder sometimes ...
how your performance will go...
Huh?
Don't mistake me...
I didn't hire you just to turn you into a star and make you perform.

The hours will pass...
The concert will end without incident.
I'll remain in the lobby, to seat any patrons who arrive late.
It will be a successful launch.
I doubt you'll have been to a party like this before,
but there are enough distractions to keep you from worrying about such things.
Good luck, Maestro...
I'll murmur in your ear, like a talisman for luck.
And then leave the rest to you.
But only the gods know...
How all this will end...

!!
So this is the sort of place that turns you on!
Right here on the grass ? Or–
Oh come on. I'd like to see you outside the theatre sometimes
Please–?
All right then, shall we go someplace nice?
GRAB
That sounded like an invitation to me...
THUD
Oh, I don't think I'm suited for that
So, red or white? Or rose?
I'd love to see you try your hand at ballet sometime
Mr Carlucci, you certainly can put on a show
Afterwards, if you're feeling so inclined...
Sir, your wife is waiting at the hotel...
And I'm terribly sorry, but I have other business to attend to.
So where to now Lorenzo?
See you in Vienna!
Lovely performance, Maestro.
I'm looking forward to this winter.
Take care, Mr Carlucci!

After this... we'll drive until we reach the ocean.
We can probably make it by morning.
I'm not laughing.
Crazy idea. You're laughing at me, aren't you?
And I'll be waiting for you at the theatre.
As its manager.
Lorenzo...
I want to spend time with you after the next concert.
I'm no less eager than you are, dear. But, you're in good health, and we'll see each other again.
So there's no chance for tonight.
Can't possibly keep that youngster waiting.
Like a mutt that's been dumped on you—
Take care.
TAXI

Hey.
If you're going to play at being lord of the manor, put some thought into it.
It's bad for employee morale when you do things this way
And if you pull a stunt like this again—
It's not like I hadn't thought of that.
Kenzo...If you hadn't touched a piano in ten years, you wouldn't be able to play, either.
Much less at the level that's expected of a soloist.
You made it into the music academy even though you hated it so much, you'd rather have died!
You're a genius, aren't you?
When I first came here, I thought I could put up with anything for the money I was getting.
But it's different now.
Kenzo...
Next time, I'm walking out.
Lorenzo!
So take the cloak off, now! It's embarrassing to see you in that, when you're trying to browbeat me!
Didn't he say that he wants to see you onstage, too?!
If you're going to play half-assed just to amuse Freier. Then you should have refused from the start!
For the concert, a different pianist will have to—
I can play at the audition, but that's it.
And if it means being onstage with you...
Then I'll set aside my personal feelings and do whatever it takes.


Creak
Kenzo?
I'll be in the other room today
And in any case,
the least I could do was make him get rid of that costume...
I...
When I see myself reflected in other people's eyes, my fingers just stop working
...I said.
Huh?
Exhausted from work that evening, he fell asleep beside my piano....
However...
He says this - And yet, he still wants to go through with it?!

I don't have time to repair the other one, you see.

It's even in tune.

.....

Check this out, I found it in your house.

This isn't too strange a sight for the stage, is it?

Forgive me

For what I said yesterday...

I get a salary room and board and sometimes—you let me take your car for a drive.

But what I'd rather have is for you to take off the cloak.

Because it frightens me.

Don't be stupid...

Say goodbye to the man who used to stand on rooftops.

whoosh

Instead of the cloak...?

Would this do?

I almost didn't recognize you...!

You bought a piano?!

Don't be silly!

Although if I make it big... maybe I could buy it.

I rented it.

In my music academy days
Kenzo
there was an older student...
I never learned his name but...
without a doubt, he was my favorite.

That's not what the score says
If you can't read it, then you can't play it correctly
What?!
Well, then tell me how should it be!
I enjoyed listening to him talk...
This other student who had the same passion that I did.

See?
Even though his hands shook, he still produced unbelievably perfect music.
Nothing to cry about, right?
I was frustrated, because I didn't understand, and I felt like I should.
Fantaisie Impromptu

I finally felt—
That I had seen him stripped of his masks!
Tend!

But now in reality

I have the chance to perform onstage with this man.

Fantaisie Impromptu

Before, I would have taken this opportunity to pay him back for all his criticism of my playing.
Oh-right, you can't play with people watching.
Piano Concerto Duet. You can't just jump straight into it.
Shouldn't we practice with something easier first?
Lorenzo's been out of the loop for ten years.
Kenzo, give me a few hours with this.
But it's different for him than it is for me—have the feeling I shouldn't hassle him
Not when he was saying things like that...
Long enough to get used to the first part of the melody.
Kenzo
Freier comes back in two months.
We don't have much time.
In all that time, he never once touched the keys of a piano
Will he be able to get his playing up to soloist-caliber in time?
Well yeah, but...
His fingers scarcely moved over the keys.
By and by, dawn approached.
Lorenzo ...?

CLATTER

You're still doing that...?
I erased it. Juliaro gave it to me.
The number? ...Of course

No, I'll go. When's a good time for you?
No, I'm not criticizing you.

Come on in.
You work during the day. Anyway I'll be good.
Can I sleep with you?

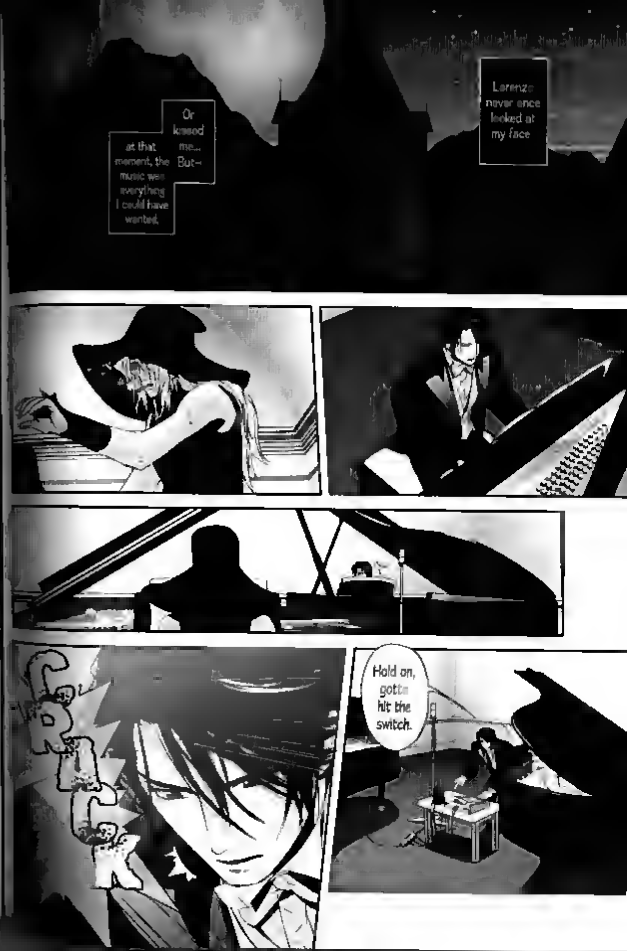
It gets in the way.
Brush your hair back when you're wearing the tuxedo.
I've got a request for you, too.

If you're kissing me, I can't keep my promise to be good...
What's this?

What's going on...?!
This is totally different from how he played yesterday
Chopin's Fantaisie Impromptu.
The Lorenzo from my past had come back!
You can really play! Why were you trying to scare me?!
Kenzo ...!
Right!
Hold up a sec— Should we record this?
Yeah, but I don't have a micro-phone...
Oh, wait, I think it might be in my father's room.
I didn't knew how it had happened but.
So, shall we get started?
A few days later ...
Lorenzo had reached the point where he could play it, but with difficulty.
He still made too many mistakes and was no where near ready to perform.
However, one evening...
Has he lost his mind?!
Sure?
Why is he wearing that?

Freer's masterpiece Piano Concerto Duet
An unbelievably perfect sound...
I could feel myself responding to it.
Is it really [redacted] my fingers are moving of their own volition?
Playing together with that creature...
Lorenzo was drenched in sweet even though he only played the highlight of that piece.
You forgot to feed him, didn't you!
No, I fed him.
FFFT!
...An earthquake coming?
What's wrong, kitty?
Maybe he's getting old?
Go for it.
Ready? I'm turning on the recorder.
Let's try this and see how we do together.
We should be celebrating today!

What are you doing ...?
Lorenzo ...?!
It's a straight drop out there! Lo—!!
He's gone crazy!
YANK


Lorenzo never once looked at my face
Or kissed me... But—
at that moment, the music was everything I could have wanted.
Hold on, gotta hit the switch.
CLICK

They're coming to kill me...!
Are you on drugs ?!
THUD
Calm down !!
Huh?!
!!
UMP
CRACK

GRAB
Lorenzo!
You took something!
Snorted it, or...
Didn't take... anything
Liar!
Lo-...!

A pleasant voice...
Kenzo...?
!!
Kenzo?
It keeps calling out to me
Kenzo!
YANK
AAUUUGH!

Kenzo
I wish I could bury myself in a grave.
But if you wanted it... I would come back to you at any moment.
Did I drive him to this?!
I'm not the irrational child that I used to be... If you can't play without the drugs, then just stop.
We'll call off the audition.
I... "negotiated" with Freier to get you this chance.
I will kill you if you throw it away.
What ...?
Kenzo I can only play in this
...space I make for myself. Not of my own volition, the way you can. That makes all the difference in the world
And I gave up the piano because I realized that
I can see it... the light
of true genius shining from you
So don't ever give up...
Had this man transformed me into a pianist against my will?
Lorenzo .....
I won't make you play again.
You hit your head, didn't you...We should take you to the hospital
It can't make me any dumber than I was before

It's your job.
But you can't fall out of practice.

For the next week, I'm going to stay right here and keep an eye on you.
No way, not playing no matter what you say
Your pianist is on holiday.

No more piano for today!
Are you still stoned?!
Right, so we should practice.

You might not give a damn what people like me think, but...
sluuuk

clench

I'm glad it wasn't anything serious.

We argued all the way to the hospital about which of us should drive.
So I had a head injury, and Lorenzo was high.

!

And there would go the audition.
If I'd told them I'd have been locked up in rehab immediately.

I noticed you didn't mention your little problem.
WHUMP

beep
Kenzo —
Do you have dreams of your own?
Huh?
Or are you just putting up with my whims because you think it's your job?
I hated the 17 years that I spent doing nothing but piano.
I hated having to sacrifice everything else for that.
So, I ended up running away from it all.
I don't want that to happen to you.
What if I'd died?
Then an apology wouldn't be enough
Stop it!
This is the drugs talking!
I don't care about anything else...
but if I'd lost you I would have lost everything!
I get agitated if I don't hear your playing.
And you can't possibly intend to throw this audition away.
Forget about the damn piano!
What about my agitation?
Christ's sake, Lorenzo, you're addicted
Not a chance, you're staying right where you are
Since I'd have to play this sober that means we really need to practice
Know And

What?
It's not like I didn't get any offers.
The ladies were—!
Just stop talking
What? I turned them down...
Damn it...
I don't care about becoming famous.
I was famous before, and I didn't like it.
It wasn't what I thought it would be
Didn't manage to find a steady lover?
Only a handful of them last very long.
Talented new musicians debut all the time.
Not...
because they get bad reviews and have to quit...
!
how to calm you down...
Let me think.
I bet I know...
musicians...
So this is Stage Manager Carlucci's way of reassuring overwrought
He can't trick me!
Not with this—!
This...
Is this part of my job too?!
Kenzo

Will you play the piano forever?
...
Yes.
Ugh... It's no use.
I can't go against his wishes...

Lorenzo

I feel like that would help me recover some things I've lost.
Playing in a forgotten faraway church

I'd like to go to a third-world country sometime and play for them.

And then they find out... that reality isn't like that.
expect that after all the work they've put into getting this far, they'll be handed the world on a plate.

...Then if I do everything you ask...
Does that mean you'll stay with me forever?

But this was the man who remembered me for all those years ...

Kenzo .. the time I spent with you was the happiest I'd ever been.

The man in the cloak was lost to me.

That's why I couldn't stop searching for you...

That's why I don't want you to overdose and die.

I'm already dying.

Bury me inside you.

But you won't have a producer

We'll have to set up the stage ourselves

Kenzo. Once you've made your name and fortune,

it will be easy to do what you're talking about.

You'd do that for me?

With me ..?

you'll have the freedom to do whatever you want.

In ten or twenty years...

make it onstage just once.

This won't be over after you

I told you—
That's not your job, it's Freier's.
I really think we ought to be looking for another pianist.
Kenzo
Don't worry
Things will work out somehow. If this
fails, we'll think of something else.
The test rehearsal is tomorrow...
At what time?
Three.
We had Lorenzo's piano moved out...
And replaced it with an automated model...
Freier's Piano Concerto Duet — I had to learn...

We're back at the theatre today.
Starting preparations for the upcoming concert.
Which Alexander Freier is guest-directing.
...In addition to his Sibelius...
beeep
beeep
You're clear
Stop!
Mm? I told you to stay inside.
I'm going to help carry stuff!
Get back inside until Freier arrives!
There's nowhere for me to...

Lorenzo.
What sort of man is Freier?
Is he difficult?
Is he the type to listen to what other musicians think?
I know some conductors won't...
Yes.
...He respects the opinions of his soloists.
What do you mean by "difficult" ...?
You have a suggestion to make?
Just one!
I plan on doing something about Freier's "difficulties" afterwards.

Welcome, Maestro!
Freier's here!
Hot outside today, isn't it?
That voice...!
I ended up slipping away in spite of myself— I knew where I wasn't wanted.
Lorenzo...
It's been too long, Maestro You just arrived here yesterday, correct?
I see you're as busy as ever
I'm leaving everything to you
Which puts me in your debt again.
I'm glad it's been too long?
Not so glad that you came back
Lorenzo
I think you've lost some weight...
Hey now!!
You old perv! Get your hands off him!
Mr. Freier
I'm sorry, I know it's chaotic around here, but after work, could I have a word—
Kenzo?
Stand your ground Kenzo...

Piano Concerto Duet
You played this together?
It's not bad, but ...
You can have this back.
The next time you won't be playing for a studio
This isn't going to work if you can't even perform it in front of me
POP

Getting the timing right for two pianos is a tricky business.

The two soloists need a certain level of personal rapport.

Couldn't we...

...Find a different pianist to play in his stead?

I have gathered some names from my producer, but we probably can't ask them to work with Kenza.

Then— I may be out of line in saying this... But suppose we have someone else sit at the other piano... and feign playing?

That's right.

You mean, have me directing from the other soloist seat... and then leave the rest for you to play alone?

Take this... but—

If you can't perform this in front of an audience, then it's worthless!

That disc contained the collaboration between myself and Lorenzo the "perfect pianist," who would never thereafter appear onstage.

I'm not using drugs anymore...

So it's not that he didn't like the contents?

Lorenzo

Can you make a copy for me?

Mr. Frater...

Ah yes Lorenzo can't play without his ***medicine*** Thus, there's no way that you two can perform together

One of the smaller halls is empty.

I will be the judge of whether your skills can withstand the test of time

Before you let them hear it let me hear it.

Because I have a better ear than the press does.

Alexander Freier's opus, Piano Concerto Duet.

In Lorenzo's mansion, I had practiced harder than I had ever done before. Because...

there was no way to build confidence but to practice.

That's why... I had faith in myself—

You still want to do this... even though Lorenzo won't be in it?

Under my direction?

Huh...?

Do you think you can perform with me, Maestro Freier?

I could ask you the same thing—

We haven't spoken of it yet.

And in any case, will your sponsor approve of picking me?

The sponsor's opinion fluctuates with the media coverage... Can you take criticism from people who aren't involved with the actual performance?

PLOP

Because Lorenzo wishes it. I shall become a machine of unsurpassed precision—
Kenzo Shinozuka, is it? I feel like
I've heard that name before...
You put out a record under our label, correct?
I've decided that he—
Now I remember!
THAT Shinozuka!
The boy who smashed up a piano onstage ...!
Good lord! Why'd you choose him?!
Mr. Harvey, did you not just say that he was... magnificent?
I told you to pick someone off this list!
Tornstare ... Dickens ...
Stillman! What's wrong with them?
Stillman...!
He took second place at a competition that I won.
Yet he's so much higher than me now...
In particular, Stillman is currently touring in Europe.
He's a media darling now's the time to capitalize on that.
The Rachmaninoff that he's currently performing at the Rotonda even matches the tone of your music.
The Rotonda!
That's Lorenzo's theatre...
I've played with Stillman before.
He's an... irascible man.

Are you tired?
Only because I've been touring lately.
So...
Does this mean Lord Carlucci will be paying attention to my needs off stage as well?
I remember. The entire time we were onstage he kept glaring at me.
In any case, this is no ordinary piece of music. I'd be willing to accept a music student, if he had the ability for it.
Unless ...
You're unwilling to consent to my choice of soloist —?
Excuse me...
—
Hmmh
I'll consider it.
beepbeepbeep

The producer couldn't go against Freier's wishes.
So it was agreed that I could participate in Piano Concerto Duet.
In the end—
And what use would Lorenzo have for me then?
I may never play for an audience again.
If I fail onstage, the aftermath won't be like it was from my last failure.
How about going for a drive?
I'm still on the clock, but hey—
Wagner-hall
Your master's not home yet.

Ouch
Lorenzo... Are you sleeping here tonight?
It's been a long time since he's been in my room... What happened?
I'm sorry
I didn't mean to hurt you.
Kenzo !
What's the matter?
It's not his or Freier's...
He smells like cologne.
He's back...!
SLAM
Lorenzo ...?!
The light's on in my
Hm?

I can handle this for one more month.
It's not a big deal.
Kenza. There's still a month until the concert.

!!!
But I was wrong. This hurts him
I could have sworn that he slept with the performers because he enjoyed it...

Lorenzo. Do you really believe my concert will solve everything?

Should I not- believe in you?

!!
That's happened often enough before.
But... this time something's different
Lorenzo, let me look at you!

Has this happened before?
Letting them beat you. Is that part of your "job" too?

Who did it?
Then- why don't you press charges?!
Tell me, or I'll...!

No--!

You... you keep doing this... Do you enjoy it?

I just wanted to go somewhere...
I went for a drive with Wagaha earlier
...We watched the sunset from over a vineyard
You said that before, too...
Where should we go after the concert is over?
Yeah, I did.
Lorenzo.

Do you trust me?
If you stop hiding things from me, I'll stop distrusting you.
This isn't about the deal anymore.
It's about me bringing Lorenzo out of the shadows and into the light again...
with my skills!
...
You wanted to sex, right?
This... is what I've been through...
May I?
Because you're teasing me...
Ready to go again?
Naughty boy...

Is that, Stillman?!
That scent...!
!!
"Stillman in particular playing Rachmaninoff at the Rotonda..."
The cologne that I smelled on Lorenzo!
Come to think of it...
We rehearsed diligently for several days—
And soon, the concert itself was upon us!
This was it! I would be playing for a whole concert hall.
The first time since the day I smashed that piano...
Is Maestro Freier always like that before a show?
You just worry about your own matters.
Dumb ass!
How the hell could I not be nervous?!
!
...
Your hands are shaking...

Did Freier take a liking to you?
Are you torn between him and Carlucci?
And how is the famous maestro's performance? Better than this here manager's, one would hope...hahaha.
Hmm
So that's how it is
Don't get the wrong idea in that tiny, perverted head of yours!
You worthless scum, lower than a dog in heat ...!
Hmph.
I came here hoping for a freak show. Who knew I'd get to see it up close!
I shall enjoy watching your appalling conduct on-stage today.
Who knows, maybe this time, you'll kill someone in your fury at being unable to play?
I look forward to tomorrow's paper
Isn't it your job to drive out filth like that?!
Excuse me a moment ...!
!!
Kenza, stop!
It's him!
He's the one who—
Oh my.
Today's little soloist.
Stillman!
You're not performing, asshole, get out!
Kenza—!
Can't I come to see an old friend?
Lorenzo... even a beating isn't good enough for him!
HIM, Lorenzo?! You—
Kenzo, let it go!

You could just take your *medicine* and the show would be a success.

I am a stage manager, not a musician

You oughtn't think about such things at a time when you should be concentrating

And if you're well enough to tense me, Maestro ... then I'm not worried.

I brought you a hangover remedy.

Shall I take a slide to the conductor's dressing-room?

I think I drank too much at the hotel yesterday.

Stupid, really.

Maestro Freier... I was told you were slurring your words?

Come in.

Knock knock

That won't be necessary.

Lorenzo What...

would happen if I passed out, and you had to cut the performance short?

You'll be fine. Just take your medicine and the show will be a success. And afterwards I will support you off the stage if need be.

I'm not looking for your re-assurances.

Are you certain... that you can't play?

Right now—
I feel like I could take on the entire world...
He should be locked up!
Oh really! And I suppose that's proof that he's deathly ill!
Well, we were alone in the waiting room and he didn't even try to touch—
Ah, never mind
Even if he can't stand up, as long as he can sit at the piano, we'll make do, won't we?
We've set it up so that we don't even need a conductor, except at the start.
he's only pretending to play
Well, if worse comes to worst,
Are you all right?
Thanks to you!
I'm all worked up over this because you got me angry earlier!
Perfect tones floating in and out...
Hearing the sound of the piano puts me at ease.
Is it serious...?!
He was fine at the rehearsal earlier!
He's... hungover?! No way!
Er, well...
Lorenzo... how's Freier doing?

It's like all I can feel is the warmth of Lorenzo's hand.
CLAP
CLAP
It's been eight years since I've been onstage in the hall this large.
I wonder if there's anyone in the audience who knows about what I did as a child.
TAP
TAP
CLAP
CLAP
All right, this is the real thing.
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

Third Movement:
Rose of the Sun
And then at last...
The final movement—
He can't be serious! Not after we've made it this far—
?!

—Piano Concerto Duet—
First Movement
The Sound of Light
Second Movement
Gruman

Maestro, are you all right? Have you been drinking?
Not since... yesterday
Give me a few minutes to rest. then I can finish it...
Kenzo, it will continue.
Lorenzo!
Should I place a chair at the conductor's stand?
What the—who are you?!
Ah-right, Mr. Harvey...
This is... a pianist whom I invited.
You didn't happen to slip up—and take something, did you?
Three minutes, Kenzo.
Stop it
Call off the concert!
Call it off!
CLEAR
Did you forget what you promised me?! I'm packing you off to rehe—
Mmf ...!
Maestro, a minute, if I may
Someone fetch me a chair and a micro phone
Ahem
Before commencing the final movement please permit me a few words regarding this composition
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
I'm losing my voice today
and I'm afraid you may have trouble hearing me, but...
Please try to bear with me.
This composition, is the grand sum of my work as a pianist. For it I chose to use two pianos since I wanted to try a somewhat different configuration from—
Kenzo... you're so close.
You can't stop the concert now
Play for me I beg you

I love you, Kenzo.

We can't allow Freier to continue talking in his condition.

I'll be done here in a minute.

Let me... Let me see your face.

What...

Ngh..

Remember what you said, because afterwards, I'm going to hold you to it...

Pull back! I'm about to—

Idiot.

It doesn't make me happy—to hear you say that when you're drugged up!

Today's been such a good show... So for the moment... can't you play for me?

If you get through this, I'll listen to anything you say.

Did you think you could make me obey you by doing this?

Lorenzo... Do you take me for a fool...?

In truth, he would have been no match for me if I'd decided to drag him off by force.

I know what you want to say to me. I'll go anywhere you want afterwards, rehab—even the police...

Damn it...

I can't believe he can still make me melt for him even at a time like this.

Stop it.

How many musicians have you lied to like this...?

Why can't you believe me?

I've never asked for this from anybody else...

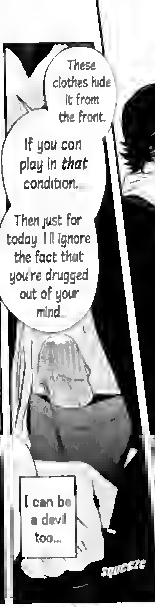
It's not like that. You're the only one who means anything to me.

Where is he, anyway?!
That's Carlucci's job!
Hey, the soloist shouldn't have to set up his own chair!

That's I had to keep Lorenzo from having to speak—
expecting this long haired parent to show up at dang
had to pretend

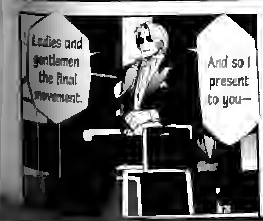
Final Movement
Jules Verne

Kanzo
If you can still play even with that on your mind...
then afterwards, I'll make you glad we got to perform this together!


These clothes hide it from the front.
If you can play in *that* condition...
Then just for today I'll ignore the fact that you're drugged out of your mind...
I can be a devil too...
squeeze

Ah...
You're aroused as well...

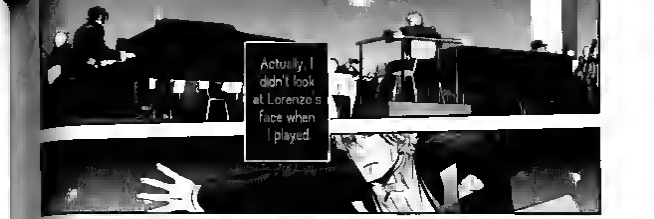
That is if he still wants it afterwards


Ladies and gentlemen the final movement.
And so I present to you—

Of course! It had to be you!
Mr. Stillman! Were you the mystery pianist?
Mr. Stillman, why didn't you mention this sooner? Why such secrecy?
Huh ?!
FLASH
?!

It was a marvelous performance!
Oh, don't be so modest!
Didn't you see me in the audience?!
Et tu, Harvey? Don't be stupid!

If you could clear the way please
He's not feeling well.
Maestro...
Of course!
Mr. Stillman! You were awesome!
Are you even listening to me?!
My elegant style is much more refined!
It was lovely, darling!


Actually, I didn't look at Lorenzo's face when I played.

I listened to the length of each note and to the familiar sound of his breath.
From that alone, I could imagine his face.

FWOSH
Who was that pianist?!
give a deep sigh of relief
And I'm certain that I heard Lorenzo's shadowy figure...
A bare moment later, we were getting a standing ovation—
And then—
RISE

And Freier got back onstage by himself!

The doctor said that most people play it cool, until then it's too late.

On the contrary, he should be grateful it was discovered early.

I shouldn't have...

...I forced Freier back onto the stage...

I have to draw the line here...

Before we do, it's your turn.

Let's go back to the play house

Were you just joking when you promised me that you would stop doing drugs?

Because I was serious!

All this fuss! I'm just tired...

I called your wife too

That's the press for you.

Look at 'em all... like jackals

You think I'm letting you drive like that?!

PLUCK

I'll get the car now...

He was having a stroke...

Freier wasn't hungover or fatigued or anything like that.

Starting tomorrow, I will remain forever at your side

If you'll let me

Nope. I can't trust you.

With the drugs out of his system, he had returned to his usual self...

smack

Your punishment is being confined to my room for the next three months

and take you home.

As for putting you in rehab I'll let it slide just this once

In return, I'll forgo the drive that you promised me...

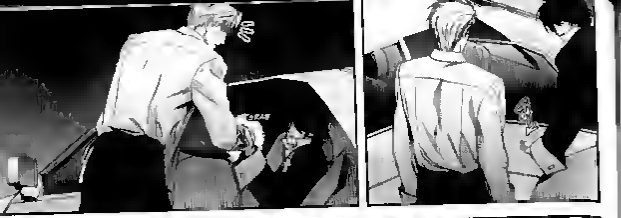
!...! You...

Shit! This makes me as much of a brute as Stilman!

Whatever you're carrying... hand it over!

I just wanted to make sure you succeeded and that your career was made, at any cost.

That's all...



Sit on my lap.
Lorenzo.
Until now... I couldn't afford to be kind to others...
So I always wound up shutting them out of my life.

Henceforth, I'll endeavor to behave more like an employee should...
and try to put your mind at ease.

Kenzo
The concert today was a mess... However, given the circumstances and seeing the audience's response, I would say it was a success.
But even now that it's over and done with...
I still haven't seen you smile.

"Yes, that's how Lord Lorenz makes a laughingstock of this house too."

The show may have succeeded, but I failed you.
I'm sorry...

...
Haha... you're about to call me a liar.
I know it sounds like just a line.
But I've never had a relationship with a musician outside the theatre...
And I've never let anyone inside my house before.
During the concert earlier, I was the only one who had gotten a release.
I was impressed, but... I won't... do that to you ever again.
I'll still perform my job, but you don't have to pay me anymore.
So... do you think you could promote me to "lover"?
Because if I don't trust you, then we can't make any progress.
I believe you.
I'll say this now because I have the feeling that if I don't it will be a while before I ever do—

You said, "You're my employee, are you not?"
No... you have.
You didn't have to!
Did I ever say that I wanted you to behave like an employee?
Kenzo...
you are not a "performing musician" to me.
That's what you said yourself the first time you met Freier.
What I wanted to call you at that moment was,
"most precious one."

Press on this, please.
It will probably make some noise.

After that, Lorenzo never touched a piano... I think.
Not that I ever heard, anyway.
CLANG

I don't know how many years it's been since I've heard that sound!
Oh my!

After that—
These days, I often catch sight of him on television, conducting or playing the piano.
Frasier made a full recovery.

Lorenzo,
I love you...
I said it first, you know.
SORRY, I DIDN'T THINK YOU MEANT IT.
Oh!
Un-requited love, huh...?

What's this?

Have they already finished the repairs up there?

I can't tune the piano if I can't hear it!

!

This song...

Not only the piano...

But the bells have been fixed too—

Everyone will be so pleased!

There's also a computer installed so it can perform automatically.

Which makes it much easier to play.

As you requested, the levers have been replaced by a keyboard.

Oh, I'd love to hear that!

Mr. Shinozuka...

Could you play something on the bells for us?

Hmm... no reason why not...

Aftertalk

When I began the revision process to create this manuscript from the serialized version I had no idea how arduous it would turn out to be I would guess that I ended up altering more than 90% of the panels. This story has a particularly nocturnal feel to it so I just kept adding more shading even as I wondered how that would turn out in print.

This comic marked my first attempt at creating a manuscript from data that didn't use any paper at all I started off using the standard kind of pen-input system but I found it receeeally difficult not being able to draw the pictures directly, but then a machine came out that could draw directly, which made the process exceptionally easy. The software is better too.

Adding up all the time I spent on it from the beginning of "Sehnsucht" to the end of "Piano Duet" I must have taken about two years to finish. As a result I ended up completely revising the initial manuscript.

With regard to the content their faces always had a tendency to look vaguely artificial Carlucci's in particular but possibly Kenzo's as well (Maybe I went a little overboard with the down-turned eyelashes thing.) I don't get to draw that sort of thing in my illustrating job, so I enjoyed getting to draw my own characters. Even in my own work I have couples that I'm especially fond of and I'm glad they got their happy ending.

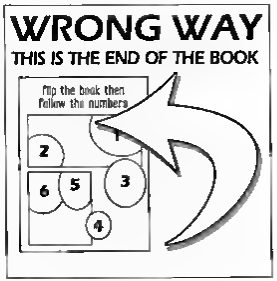
My deepest gratitude goes out to my readers who made it to this point and also to everyone who helped make this project possible.

November 2004

special thanks: S. Fujikawa sama
http://homepage3.nifty.com/i-graph/

ISBN-13 978-1933809-23-6
ISBN-10 1933809-23-X
51299
9 781933 809236

Translation + Gabrial Pellikka
Copyreader + T Nguyen
Editor + Lin An
Chief Editor + A Naculai



DramaQueen
E-mail: editor@onedramaqueen.com
Come visit us at: www.onedramaqueen.com

Virtuoso Di Amore ©2005 Uki Ogasawara.
Originally published in Japan by Chocolat Comics.
English translation license arranged with Shinkosha Co. Limited.
English translation ©2006 by DramaQueen, L.L.C.

All rights reserved. No unauthorized reproduction of this work is allowed.
English translation rights in North America, Europe, UK, Australia, and New Zealand.
The stories, characters, and events depicted in this publication are entirely fictional.

ISBN: 978-1-933809-236
First Edition: December 2006

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
—Printed in USA—